

**Highway Safety Leadership Forum
Lexington, KY
June 2, 2003**

OPENING

[Ms. Sandberg]

- It is my pleasure to be here today.
- We work together as Safety Advocates to reach a common goal: reduced crashes, fatalities, and injuries on our nation's highways.
- We look for opportunities to pool our efforts, energy, and resources for the greatest safety impact.
- We do this by identifying causes of crashes, establishing accident countermeasures, promoting driving behavioral changes, and identifying and implementing emerging technologies in vehicles and on our highways.
- The groups represented in this room -- AASHTO; G-H-S-A; the I-A-C-P; AAMVA; and C-V-S-A – are our long-time safety partners.
- Your efforts have been instrumental in the safety successes we've achieved to date.
- You have essential roles in this important national mission, and we are looking to advance our partnership with you.
- Just as DOT and its long-time safety partners work together, my fellow Administrators and I ask State transportation executives to work within their States to improve highway safety. How?
- First, break down organizational barriers that BLOCK highway traffic safety improvements in your State government.
- Second, work COLLABORATIVELY and STRATEGICALLY with partners in your State to improve highway traffic safety.
- As Dr. Runge said, nearly 43 thousand people lose their lives on our highways every year. This is UNACCEPTABLE.
- Of the 43 thousand, nearly 5 thousand individuals die each year as a result of crashes involving trucks. This too, is UNACCEPTABLE.

- Together, we have made important progress toward achieving our goal. The large truck fatality rate has declined five years in a row. But more has to be done.
- Achieving our safety goals is a tall order, and will require the concerted effort of all of us.
- So that's why I'd like to tell you about FMCSA's safety program initiatives. They are:
 - SAFETEA Reauthorization
 - Improving highway safety data, and
 - Strengthening enforcement

DATA

- FMCSA is a data-driven organization. We base our safety program decisions on information to ensure the most effective use of our limited resources.
- But if we are going to realize our goal of saving more lives and reducing injuries, one thing is clear – we will need better highway safety data.
- Improving our data is our highest near-term safety priority.
- We depend heavily on driver, carrier, crash, violation, vehicle, registration, and related data.
- For example, carrier, violation, and safety fitness data is used to target enforcement operations.
- Also, crash and vehicle data will be used in the Large-Truck Crash Causation Study to examine causal and contributory factors in truck crashes.
- Data is used to develop countermeasures and focus resources. Recently, I asked staff to find out where crashes and fatalities occur by State. Here's what they discovered.
- 75 percent of large truck crash fatalities occur in ten states. The slide shows them in yellow and orange.
- Eight of those same ten states are also in the top ten States for car fatalities. The slide shows them in yellow.
- Use of this data is critical to show us how to focus our energy and effort to reduce overall fatalities.

- Incomplete or inaccurate highway safety data can draw us to mistaken conclusions and drive us in the wrong direction.
- Our data needs to be complete, accurate, timely, accessible, and compatible. But there are problems.
 - Underreporting. Only 70 percent of estimated crashes are received.
 - Accuracy. Only 85 percent of crash data is found to be accurate.
 - Timeliness. It takes 106 days to move crash data from the roadside to our data bank.
- We have several current activities and new proposals to improve highway safety data. Here are two examples.
- The Commercial Vehicle Analysis Reporting System (CVARS) will boost heavy truck crash reporting; start new data collection and reporting approaches; and promote best practices.
- The President's Fiscal Year 04 budget includes support for increasing the quality, timeliness, and accuracy of State data systems, and improvements in state driver-licensing procedures.
- Highway safety data IS important. That's why I encourage you to:
 - Make data a priority in your State and organization.
 - Data will be a critical part of your State Strategic Highway Safety Plan.
 - Lead the effort to increase the amount, quality, and timeliness of data, and
 - Support law enforcement efforts to accurately collect traffic records data.

ENFORCEMENT

- FMCSA's next safety program initiative is STRENGTHENED ENFORCEMENT.
- Enforcement saves lives and is the key to maintaining compliance with regulations.
- We count heavily upon the operations you conduct at the State level, including compliance reviews, roadside inspections, and traffic enforcement.
- Enforcement of hazardous materials, and safety regulations continues to be a special focus of our enforcement efforts.

- We recognize the potential consequences, SAFETEA further strengthens enforcement of hazardous materials safety regulations. This includes
 - Cargo tank facility reviews
 - Hazardous materials compliance reviews
 - Shipping reviews, and
 - Inspections.
- FMCSA plays a key role at our nation's Northern and Southern borders. We will continue to conduct inspections of trucks at the borders, and will work with State border partners to do the same.
- And enforcement also focuses on new carriers, what we call New Entrants. And this is a challenge, because 40 to 50 thousand new carriers enter the business every year.
- Because new entrants are in a disproportionate share of large truck highway incidents, we will conduct face-to-face audits of new carriers.
- The audits will assess safety operational readiness and provide educational opportunities. The audits evaluate three key areas:
 - Knowledge and applicability of safety regulations
 - Safety management systems, and
 - Safety readiness
- State partners are critical in all aspects of enforcement. So what can you do to make it more effective? Here are two suggestions:
 - First, maintain a vigorous focus on the enforcement mission.
 - Second, continue participation in partnership safety strike force activities like those starting this week.
 - Roadcheck 2003, June 3-5
 - National Cargo Tank Check 2003, June 3-6
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MCSAP GRANTS

- I've told you about the State and Federal partnership to collect safety data and promote effective enforcement. Here's how that partnership is funded.
- Funds come the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program, or "MCSAP". MCSAP grants are the primary way we move from SAFETY FOCUS to SAFETY ACTION.

- For Fiscal Year 04, the President's MCSAP budget proposal is \$165 million. That covers:
 - Basic grants
 - Incentive grants
 - High Priority grants
 - Border grants
 - Funds for State training and administration, and
 - Grants to support state audits of new entrant carriers
- The Basic MCSAP grants are formula grants totaling \$130 million. They support your motor carrier data, regulatory, and enforcement efforts.
- Under SAFETEA, MCSAP grant funds would grow from \$164.5 million in FY 04 to \$184 million in FY 09. This totals just over a BILLION dollars in six years.

SAFETEA

- SAFETEA structures FMCSA grants into four programs totaling \$1.4 billion during the six-year authorization period. Let me tell you a little about each program.
- First, MCSAP
 - Continues to be the MAIN way to fund safety improvements.
 - \$164.5 million total
 - State grantees continue to have flexibility to invest in areas of the greatest need of crash reduction.
 - Calls for grant plans to be tied to each State's Strategic Highway Safety Plan, the plans Dr. Runge talked about earlier.
 - Authorizes up to \$17 million to support State-conducted new entrant safety audits reimbursable at 100 percent.
 - Eliminates the border grant set-aside created in TEA-21.
- Next, Commercial Driver License (CDL) Improvements
 - State compliance reviews continue to find deficiencies in CDL licensure
 - \$22 million total This is an \$11 million increase
 - Fund improved State control and oversight of State licensing
 - Fund management control practices to detect and prevent fraud

- Fund State efforts to verify Social Security and Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) numbers
- Maintain central depository of Mexican and Canadian driver convictions
- Border Enforcement
 - Border safety activities continue to remain a high priority.
 - \$32 million total
 - Border operations are currently funded as a 5 percent set-aside from MCSAP, but we have proposed to create a separate grant program to address current and future State needs at the border.
- Performance and Registration Information Systems Management Program (PRISM)
 - Links safety fitness to vehicle registration at the State level
 - \$4 million total
 - Identifies high-risk carriers based on their actual on-road performance.
 - Immediate visual identification to law enforcement that the carrier should NOT be on the road by removing the license plates.
- Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) this money is in the FHWA budget.
 - Critical to increasing efficient freight movement
 - \$25 million total
 - Focus of attention from Department decision makers
- In addition to grants, our reauthorization proposals aim to strengthen our enforcement programs. These initiatives include:
 - Giving jurisdictions greater flexibility to use MCSAP funding for traffic enforcement around large-trucks.
 - Extending the Agency's enforcement reach to the intrastate operations of interstate carriers.
 - Necessary to enhance safety and ensure uniformity in enforcement and oversight responsibilities.

- Presently, we cannot reach intrastate operations represents an artificial line from a safety point-of view.
- We propose reciprocal authorities:
- Federal Interstate actions will impact Intrastate operations
- State Intrastate actions will impact Interstate operations
- Suspending, amending, or revoking the registration of a for-hire motor carrier if any of its officers has engaged in a pattern or practice of avoiding compliance, or concealing non-compliance.
 - Provision is intended to address those few motor carrier officers who have shown unusual and repeated disregard for safety compliance.
- Finally, some additional initiatives we are pursuing through SAFETEA include:
 - Increasing penalties for out-of-service and false documentation
 - Penalty for denial of access to records
 - CDL – Medical Qualifications linkage
 - Improved enforcement of Household Goods (HHG) regulations
- Thank you for inviting me to address this important forum. I look forward to working with you to continue the trend in reduced motor carrier-related fatalities.